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THE HOLY PROPHET AND THE ORIENTALISTS

Mazheruddin Siddiqi

The Orientalists have levelled a number of false accusations against the holy Prophet. Some of these are mere wild speculations unsupported by facts. Others amount to misinterpretation of facts. In this article we shall deal with some of those charges against the holy Prophet and try to present an objective interpretation of facts.

Accusation of low birth:

According to Margoliouth, the holy Prophet did not belong to a noble family and came of humble origins. He says, "It seems clear that Muhammad came of a humble family. The Koraish in the Koran wonder why a Prophet should be sent to them who was not of noble birth".[1]

The above remarks of Margoliouth constitute a travesty of facts, for the holy Prophet certainly came of a noble family. The Prophet's great grandfather was Hāshim who had been installed in the office of entertaining the pilgrims and providing them with water. He was a man of such commanding position that he concluded treaties with the Roman authorities and the Ghassānid Princes. The success and glory of Hāshim excited the envy of Umayya, the son of his brother, 'Abd Shams. A contest between the two followed. A Khozā'ite soothsayer was appointed umpire and having heard the pretensions of both, declared Hāshim to be victor. As for the grandfather of holy Prophet, 'Abd al Muṭṭalib, William Muir, another Orientalists writes. "The fame and influence of 'Abd al Muṭṭalib now waxed greater and greater; a large family of powerful sons added to his dignity, he became and continued to his death the virtual chief of Mecca".[2]

A man descended from such illustrious forefathers can not be said to have belonged to a humble family. Even the Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib, though comparatively a poor man, wielded such influence in contemporary Meccan society that during his life-time the Quraish could not think of laying hands on the holy Prophet and all that they could do was

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to lead deputations to Abū Ṭālib with apeals to prevent his nephew from reviling their deities.

The Qur'ānic verse referred to by Margoliouth does not prove that the Prophet's enemies regarded him as a man who was low born. The verse in question says, "And they say: If only this Quran had been revealed to some great men of the two towns"[3] (XLIII-31). The verse says that, according to contemporary Meccan standards, the Prophet was not a great man. This is very different from saying that he came from a humble family. The comparison in this verse is not between the family of the Prophet and the families of the so-called great men. All that it shows is that the Prophet was not recognised as a great man by his opponents.

Did the Prophet suffer from epileptic fits?

The Orientalists say that the holy Prophet used to suffer from epileptic fits. They have arrived at this conclusion either from the physical accompaniments which marked the Prophet at the time when he received a divine revelation or from an incident in the boyhood of the Prophet when he lived with his foster-mother, Ḥalīma. The incident has been related by Ibn Isḥāq in the following passage :-

"Some months after our return he and his brother went with our lambs behind the tents, when his brother came running and said to us, "two men in white have seized the Quraysh brother of mine and thrown him down and opened up his belly and are stirring it up". We ran towards him and found him standing up with a livid face. We took hold him and asked him what was the matter. He said, "two men in white raiment came and threw me down and opened up my belly and searched therein for I know not what." So we took him back to our tent".[4]

Montgomery Watt refutes this allegation of the Prophet suffering from epileptic fits in his book, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman.* He says :-

"Such accounts led some Western critics to suggest that he had epilepsy, but there are no real grounds for such a view. Epilepsy leads to physical and mental degeneration, and there are no signs of that in Muhammad; on the contrary, he was clearly in full possession of his faculties to the very end of his life."[5]

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Meeting with the Christian monk, Baḥīrah.

When he was nine years old, the holy Prophet is said to have travelled to Syria with his uncle, Abū Ṭālib. It is related that when he reached the town of Buṣra, a Nestorian Christian monk, Baḥīrah, at once recognised him as the would-be Prophet and insisted on Abū Ṭālib that he should take him back to Mecca, for he was exposed to dangers. He also advised Abū Ṭālib to protect him from the hostility of the Jews. According to Ṭabarī, when Abū Ṭālib decided to send back the holy Prophet, Abū Bakr who was with him asked Bilāl to accompany him.[6] Ṭabarī also says that at that time the Prophet was nine years old.[7]

This small incident has been seized upon by the Orientalists to create the misunderstanding that the holy Prophet learned all his knowledge of religion and specially of Christianity from Baḥīrah and it was on the basis of information furnished to him by this monk that the Prophet is said to have laid the pattern of his future religion. But all this is a travesty of facts. In the first place, the story is wholly unauthentic and has been rejected by many historians of Islam. For the story mentions Abū Bakr and Bilāl as having travelled with the holy Prophet. If the holy Prophet was nine years old at that time, Abū Bakr must have been seven years old. Then also Bilāl who was even younger was not even born at the time. Therefore, the story is patently false. Again, if the Prophet was nine years old at the time, as Ṭabarī writes, is it thinkable that he could have learnt so much at this tender age from Baḥīrah that in the words of his critics, he laid the pattern of his future religion on the information furnished to him by the Syrian monk. If the holy Prophet had followed what all was taught by Baḥīran, how could he have rejected doctrines like those of Trinity, Crucifixion, Atonement and Incarnation which form the core of Christianity? The Quranic teachings about Christianity are contrary to what a Christian monk would have taught.

Alleged doubts of the holy Prophet about his divine mission.

Sir William Muir maintains that the Prophet was not convinced in the initial stages that he had been commissioned by God to preach Islam. It was only after a long period of doubts and hesitancy that he became certain that he was divinely commissioned. He writes :-

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"Thus was Muhammad led by such processes as we can only conjecture, but seemingly after a protracted period of doubt and hesitancy — to give forth his message as proceeding direct from the Almighty."[8]

And again :-

"The accounts, however, are throughout confused and sometimes contradictory, and we can only gather with certainty that there was a time during which the mind of Muhammad hung in suspense and doubted the reality of a heavely mission".[9]

This is a grave allegation and is not supported by facts. It is a wild guess of Sir William Muir for which he brings no proof. One may ask him how a man who had no certainty and confidence in the divine nature of his own mission could inspire his wife, Khadijah, his cousin 'Alī and his close friend, Abū Bakr, with the belief that he had been divinely commissioned. If he had shown the slightest doubt or hesitancy about the supernatural nature of his mission, how could these three accept him as a Prophet immediately after he received his first revelation. It is on record that when the holy Prophet, after receiving his first revelation, went home and related his experiences to Khadijah, she at once testified to his having been divinely commissioned and, in order to reassure herself, took the Prophet to Waraqah bin Naufal who assured both of them that it was the same angel who brought the divine message to the Prophet that had appeared to Moses. Is it thinkable that the Prophet remained unconvinced even after this assurance by a learned authority? Sir William Muir makes too much of the fact that the Prophet, in his moments of gloom, contemplated suicide and tried to throw himself down from the rocks. But was this due to his doubts about the nature of his mission? This conclusion is not justified. The real fact is that the Prophet thought of committing suicide not because of doubt and hesitancy but due to the awful responsibility laid upon him by God to which, he thought, he might be unequal. Now this se nse of responsibility and the consequent fear born of it, implies a deep co nviction that he had been sent by God to reclaim to virtue and godliness an erring people.

The Satanic verses.

When the Muslims migrated to Abyssinia, they heard the news after some time that the Quraish had accepted Islam and that persecution had

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ceased. Many of them, anxious to join their families, returned to Mecca but, when they reached there, they were told that the report was false. Therefore, while some of them hastened back to Abyssinia, others decided to stay in Mecca under the protection given to them by some chiefs.

The news that the Quraish had accepted Islam spread because one day in one of his Prophetic trances, the Prophet was reciting within the Ka'ba some verses which now form part of the fifty third chapter of the Holy Qur'ân. When he came to the words, "What think ye of al-Lāt, al 'Uzza and Manāh, the third besides", an idolator who was present on the occasion anxious to avert the threatened denunciation called out, "They are exalted damsels and their intercession may be hoped for". These words were supposed to form part of the Prophet's revelation and the Quraish overjoyed at the trick or at the supposed concession of the Prophet expressed their willingness to come to terms with him. But when the Prophet learned what had happened, he immediately proclaimed the words, 'They are naught but emply names, which you and your fathers have in-'ented".

According to Ibn Sa'd and Ṭabarī, the Prophet actually uttered the words, "They are exalted damsels and their intercession may be hoped for". When the Quraish heard these words, they said that since the Prophet had recognised their deities, they were ready to make peace with him. According to Ṭabarī, the same night Gabrial came to the Prophet and when the latter recited to him the chapter in which these verses occurred, Gabrial said, "I did not take these verses to you".[9]

Therefore, God rescinded these verses and added the words, "They are but emplty names which you and your fathers have invented".

Shiblī who rejects the whole story as apocryphal, says that it was the practice of the disbelievers that when the Prophet recited the Qur'ān to them, they made noises to prevent the people from hearing the Qur'ān. This fact has been mentioned in the following verse of the Qur'ān :-

> "Those who disbelieve say: Heed not this Qur'ān and drown the hearing of it, haply you may conquer".[10]

On this occasion when the Prophet came to the words, "what do you think of al-Lat etc", some disbeliever might have added the words,

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"They are exalted damsel etc". The people thought that the Prophet had uttered these words. Tradition attributes the recital of these words to the inspiration of Saton who was actually no other than a disbeliever. Thus the whole story has been distorted by the traditionists and historians.

Mohammad Husayn Haikal, the author of *Hayāt - Muhammad*, also rejects this story as totally unfounded. He gives the following reasons for his rejection.

1. The refugees did not return from Abyssinia because of the supposed rapproachment between the Prophet and the Quraish, but because they had heard that after the acceptance of Islam by 'Umar, the Muslims were in a position to perform their religious rites publicly and 'Umar had brought such a strength to the cause of Islam that there was no longer any fear of persecution by the idolators.

2. The Prophet had no need to make a compromise with the idolators at a time when Islam was gaining strength by the conversion of such stalwarts as Ḥamzah and 'Umar and when, through emigration to Abyssinia, Islam was being publicised in foreign countries.

3. The Holy Qur'ān clearly says that God had made the Prophet firm against all thought of making a compromise with the disbelievers. "And indeed they strove to beguile thee (Muhammad) away from that wherewith We have inspired thee, that thou shouldst invent other than It against Us and then they would have accepted thee as a friend. And if We had not made thee wholly firm thou mightest have inclined towards them a little. Then had We made thee taste a double punishment of dying, then hadst thou found no helpers against Us".[11]

Thus the testimony of the Qur'ān is that the Prophet did not incline towards the disbelievers and made no compromise with them. That was because God made him firm against such vile attractions. If the Prophet had inclined towards them or made a compromise with them, God would have made him taste a double punishment. Such being the testimony of the Qur'ān, it is a patently false story that the Prophet uttered words in praise of the Meccan deities.

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4. According to Ibn Isḥāq, this whole story was invented by the Zanādiqah (atheists) to malign the holy Prophet.

(5) There is no agreement on the content of the Satanic verses. Some traditions report that they are :-

تلک الغرانیق المعلی وان شفاعتن لترتجی

Some other traditionists say that the verses are :-

الغرانقة العلی ان شفاعتن ترتجی

Another version is as follows :-

ان شفاعتن ترتجی

Without being preceded by the word الغرانیق

Still another version says :-

وانها لهی الغرانیق العلی

The fifth version is as follows :-

وانهن لهن الغرانیق العلی وان شفاعتن لهی التی ترتجی

These conflicting versions of the Satanic verses make it highly probable that they are the invention of the athiests.

(6) The verses as found in the Qur'ān today are as follows:-

"Have ye thought upon al-Lāt and al-'Uzza and Manāt, the third, the other. Are your the males and His females. That indeed is an unfair division. They are but names which ye have named, ye and your forefathers, for which Allah revealed no warrant". (LIII-19, 23)

Now, if the Satanic verses are added to the above Qur'ānic verses, the whole passage becomes disconnected and the sense is disrupted. After the addition of Satanic verses, the passage will read as follows :-

"Have ye thought upon al-Lāt and al-'Uzza and Manāt, the third, the other. These are exalted damsels whose intercession may be hoped for. Are yours males and His females? That indeed is an unfair division. They are but names which ye and your forefathers have named, for which Allah hath revealed no warrants".

This whole passage has become self-contradictory and makes no sense.

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(7) Mohd. 'Abduh says that the term Gharānīq (damsels) has not been used by any poet or orator for the Meccan deities. It was used for a water bird of a black or a white colour.

(8) The truthfulness of the holy Prophet was recognized by all his contemporaries. Even his worst enemies admitted that he never told a lie. Can any one expect of such a man that he invented the Satanic verses and told the people that they were the verses revealed to him by God? He could never tell a lie of the sort about God, when he did not tell a lie in his day today life.

For all these reasons, Moḥd Ḥusayn Haikal dismisses the whole story as a patent falsenood.[12]

The Quraish happy at the emigration of the Prophet.

A theory has been put forward by Margoliouth that when the Prophet migrated to Medina, the Quraish were glad to be rid of him. Margoliouth writes:

"It is likely that the Kuraishite leaders, guiltless of forethought, congratulated themselves on being rid of their vexations countryman without bloodshed".[13] This is far from truth. The fact is that the Quraish pursued the Prophet when he left Mecca and reached the cave where he and Abū Bakr were hiding. Not content with this, the Quraish set a price on he head of the Prophet and promised a reward of one hundred camels to whosoever brought the Prophet or Abū Bakr in chains. When Surāqa b. Ja'sham heard of this promised reward, he pursued the Prophet and Abū Bakr and came very near the two fugitives but could not lay hands on them. When the Prophet reached Medīnah, the Quraish wrote a letter to 'Abdullah b. Ubayy in which they said, "You have given refuge to our man in your city. We swear by God that you should either kill him or expel him from Medinah. Otherwise, we would attack you and after exterminating you, we shall lay hands on your women."[14]

All this shows that the Quraish were far from being glad to be rid of the Prophet.

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Muhammad was a Prophet at Mecca but he become a politician at Medina.

It is an oft-repeated charge of the Orientalists against the holy Prophet that after he emigrated to Medina he turned into a politician and his prophetic role became subsidiary. If he had died just before emigration, the world would have acclaimed him as a real Prophet who preached his religion peacefully and suffered persecution without taking up the sword. In Medinah he fought battles against his enemies, became a warrior and indulged in the black art of politics. Thus he gave up his role as a Prophet or, at least, his Prophetic role became secondary.

Bosworth Smith replies to this charge in the following words :-

"But had he died thus (i.e. before he migrated), his name would never have been known beyond the neighbourhood of Mecca. His small band of followers would have melted away like the other t housand sect that Arabia has produced, leaving not a trace behind them, and Islam itself might have been strangled in its cradle.

"And what would this have meant for the Eastern world and for something too of the world which is not Eastern.

"The practices that Muhammad forbade and not forbade only but abolished, human sacrifices, and the murder of female infants, and blood feuds and unlimited polygamy and wanton cruelty to slaves, and drunkenness and gambling would have gone on unchecked in Arabia and the adjoining countries.

The Mongols, the Tartars and the Turks would have devastated as they did devastate the fairest regions of the earth without gaining that which, 'in some degree, softened their national character, and alone prevented their conquests from being an unmitigated evil. In Northern and Central Africa there would have been, not the semi-Civilisation of the Moors or of the Mandingoes but the brutal barbarism of the Fans and the Ashantees. The dark ages of Europe would have been doubly, nay trebly dark, for the Arabs who alone by their arts and sciences, by their agriculture, their philosophy and their virtues, shone out amidst the universal gloom of ignorance and crime, who gave to Spain and to Europe an Averroes and an Avicenna, the Al-hambra and the Al-Kazar, would have been wandering over their native deserts. As to religion, a Christianity which, in the

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East, had long become corrupt and superstitious would have become yet more corrupt and would have sunk in the condition in which it is in Abyssinia today. Over a seventh part of the earth's surface, the star-worshipers might have been whorshipping stars and the Fetish-worshipper Fetishes to this very day. The answer, therefore, to the question whether it would have been well for the Prophet and well for the world, if he had died by the Sword of the Kuraish before a wider field with its greater dangers and temptations, opened before him, is not a simple one."[15]

Far from becoming less spiritual at Medina, the Prophet of Islam touched new spiritual heights, while engaged in fighting and politics. 'Ā<u>i</u>sha asked about the *voluntary* prayers of the holy Prophet in Medina said: at night he prayed for a long time standing and for a long time sitting".[16]

Abū Dharr reports that God's messenger kept awake during the night till morning reciting one verse which was, if thou punishest them, they are thy servants and if Thou forgivest them, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise.[17]

It was in Medinah that the Prophet got up at night for prayers to such an extent that his feet became swollen: On being asked why he did this when his former and latter sins had been forgiven, he replied, "should I not be a grateful servant".[18]

The high degree of spirituality attained by the Prophet at Medina is also shown by the fact that he remained completely non-attached to the good things of this life. At Mecca he had not attained power and could not think of amassing riches. But in Medinah the situation was such and his power was so great that if he wanted, he could enjoy all the pleasures of life to the maximum extent and accumulate as much property as he wished. But he lived and died in extreme poverty, owning no possessions and no property. Sahl b. Sa'd said that the Prophet never saw white bread from the time God commissioned him till God took him. He also said that the Propnet did not see a sieve till God took him. He was asked how he could eat unsifted barley and replied that they ground it and blew it, and when some of it had flown away, they moistened and ate what was left.[19]

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How hard and abstemious was the life of the Prophet at Medina is attested by a tradition reported by 'Aisha which says that sometimes a month would come in which they did not kindle a fire, having only dates and water, unless a little meat was brought.[20]

She also said that Muhammad's family did not have a full meal of wheaten bread on two successive days but would have dates on one of them. She further said that upto the death of the Prophet they did not have a full meal of dates and water. Similarly, An-Nu'mān. b. Bashīr reports, "I have seen your Prophet unable to get enough poor dates to fill his belly.[21]

Such was the life of the Prophet at Medina when he had all the resources of Arabia at his command. Could any man touch loftier heights of spirituality? As regards his material possessions and property at Medina, a tradition by 'Āisha says that the Prophet did not leave a dinar or a dirham or a sheep or a camel and did not make a will about any thing. 'Amr b. al-Ḥārith, the brother of Juwairiya, says that when the Prophet died, he did not leave a dinar or a dirham, a slave or a slave woman, or anything but his white she-mule, his weapons and some land which he appointed as *Sadaqa*.[22]

Such being the loftiness of his spiritual life at Medina when he was the undisputed ruler of Arabia, how can it be said that he became less spiritual in Medinah or that his Prophetic role became subsidiary to his role as a Statesman?

The Prophet's place in the Constitution of Medina insignificant?

Discussing the authenticity of the document (Constitution of Medina) Montgomery Watt says, "no later falsifier under the Umayyads or 'Abbasids would have given Muhammad so insignificant a place".[23]

But only two pages later Watt says: "The document in its present form might belong to the period after the elimination of Qurayzah".[24]

Thus Montgomery Watt contradicts himself, because after the elimination of Banū Qurayzah, the Prophet wielded undisputed authority over Medina. His Meccan enemies and their allies among the Arabs had been decisively defeated in the battle of ditch. The Jewish tribes of Banū Nadhir and Banū Qainuqa' had left Medina, the Banū Quraiza had been

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completely exterminated. Who, then, might dispute authority with the Prophet at Medina? A document written at this time could hardly have given an insignificant place to the Prophet. Then the document clearly says that all the disputes in Medina will be referred to the Prophet. Does this show that he had an insignificant place in the Constitution of Medina? Again, Montgomery Watt alleges that the Prophet provoked the Quraish from the very outset of his emigration to Medina. If this is taken as true, it shows that the Prophet was solidly established at Medina, for how could, he have dared to provoke the mighty Quraish, when his position at Medina was so insignificant? For all these reasons, it can be easily maintained that the Constitution of Medina gave an important place to the Prophet, if for no other reason, at least, for the reason that he was the head of the Emigrants and the Helpers and all Muslims recognised him as a Prophet and as their sole leader. Montgomery Watt himself recognises this fact when he says :-

At any rate, by the time of the expedition against the Quraish in the month after Badr, it had been decreed that a fifth (Khums) of all spoils taken on a Muslim expedition was to go to Muhammad. For one thing, it implies that Muḥammad had been recognised in some sense the chief of the Ummah."[25]

Alleged Provocation of the Quraish by the Prophet.

Montgomery Watt alleges that the Prophet tried to provoke the Meccans soon after he took up his residence in Medina. He says, "In all this we may see a deliberate intention on Muhammad's part to provoke the Meccans."[26]

This is a false allegation. It is hardly conceiveable that in the first two or three years of his Medinese life, when the Prophet lacked sufficient armed strength and when he was ringed round by his Jewish enemies, he should have invited the Meccans to attack him in Medina. That would have been a suicidal policy. Watt contradicts himself in this when he says, "As these expeditions, even that to Badr, were razzias, where the aim was to capture booty without undue danger to oneself, the Anṣār did not presumably think tha they would provoke a great expedition against Medina, such as that of the Meccans to Uhud."[27] Not only the Anṣār but also Prophet and the Emigrants did not think that these expeditions would lead

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to an attack on Medina. The aim of these expeditions was not to provoke the Meccans but to stop their trade to Syria. It was a kind of economic blockade. A further object was to impress with Muslim strength the nomadic tribes living round Medina so that they might not make common cause with the Meccans.

Alleged non-insistence of the Prophet on his own Prophethood.

Montgomey Watt further alleges that for sometime in his early Medinese life, the Prophet did not demand from the Jews that they should recognise him as a Prophet. He says, "There is some justification for thinking that at some period during the first year or so at Medina (not necessarily in the first months) Muhammad contemplated an arrangement which would give a measure of unity but would not demand from the Jews any renunciation of their faith or acceptance of Muhammad as a Prophet with a message for them. Such an arrangement would be in accordance with the general idea that each Prophet was sent to a particular community and that the community to which he was sent was the Arabs".[28]

This is mere speculation for which Watt adduces no proof. He fails to substantiate his allegation. There is not a single verse in the Holy Qur'ān where it is said that Muḥammad was a Prophet for the Arabs only. If the Prophet contemplated an arrangement of the type suggested by Watt, it must have found mention in the Holy Qur'an. Even Ḥadīth (tradition) is innocent of such a suggestion. An arrangement of this type must have been welcomed by the Jews. Instead, as time went on, the Jews became more and more hostile to the Prophet. How is it possible to explain this hostility except on the presumption that in the Prophethood of Muḥammad (Peace be on him), they sensed a threat to their own religious system. If Muḥammad claimed that he was only a Prophet for the Arabs, where was there any danger for the Jews? It is true that Islam gives complete religious freedom to every faith and does not force the non-Muslims to recognise that Muḥammad is a Prophet. But that is very different from saying that Islam is a religion for the Arabs only or that Muḥammad had no mission for the non-Arabs. From its very inception Islam was a missionary religion, which means that it tried to convert non-Arabs to Islam, entailing the recognition of Muḥammad as a Prophet for them too. The idea that the Prophet of Islam was sent to the Arabs only is abhorrent to Islam and does

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not find a place in the whole realm of Islamic literature, the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth or the writings of religious scholars.

Allegation that the Prophet tried to mould Islam on Judaism.

In his book *Muhammad at Medina*, Montgomery Watt, writes, "specially after it seemed likely that he would go to Medina, Muḥammad appears to have tried to mould Islam on the older religion".[29]

This is a wild charge and, as usual, Watt brings no proof in support of it. The only support he can derive is from the Muslim institution of a fast on the day of Atonement, the fast of 'Āshūra, which the Jews observed. But Watt himself admits that perhaps some of the Medinian Muslims had already been in the habit of observing it.[30] So the Prophet continued a practice which was prevalent among the Medinese.

All other facts go to disprove the charge levelled by Montgomary Watt. Before the Prophet entered Medina proper, he adopted Friday as the day of Weekly congregation. The first Friday service was observed in the vale of Banī Sālim, a Khazrajite tribe. If the Prophet had tried to mould Islam on Judaism, why did he not adopt the Sabbath as the day of Weekly Service in imitation of the Jews? It is clear that from the beginning of his early career in Medina, the Prophet acted differently from the Jews. Further proof of this is furnished by the institution of Adhān (call to prayer). Even before the so-called break with the Jews, the Prophet adopted a mode of calling the Muslims to prayers which was different from that of the Jews and Christians. If he had tried to mould Islam on Judaism, he should have adopted the Jewish mode of calling to prayers. Further support to what we have said is lent by the following tradition of Mishkāt :-

"Anas said that among the Jews, when a woman menstruated, they did not eat with her and they did not live with such in their houses, so the Prophet's companions questioned him and God revaleed, "And they ask you about menstruation".....God's messenger then said, "Do every thing except sexual intercourse". The Jews heard of that and they said, "this man does not leave anything we do without opposing it". Usayd b. Ḥuḍair and 'Abbād b. Bishr came and said, "Messenger of God, the

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Jews are saying such and such. Shall we not then live with them." The face of God's messenger underwent such a change that we thought he was angry with them".[31]

In this tradition, the remark of the two Companions, Usayd b. Ḥuḍair and 'Abbad b. Bishr, "shall we not live with them (the Jews)" is very significant, for it shows that the Qur'ānic verse about menstruation and the Prophet's orders relating thereto came long before the so-called break with the Jews, when the Muslims desired to cultivate friendly relations with them. The fact was that Islam was already a different religion from that of the Jews from the early career of the Prophet at Medina and he never attempted to flatter the Jews by adopting their rules and customs. If Judaic elements are found in Islam, that is because Islam sythesised the best of what was found in all Abrahimic religions. But this does not mean that it is a pale copy or a verbatim reproduction of all these religions. It has an originality of its own.

If further proof of our assertion is needed, we shall quote a passage from Montgomery Watt himself in which he recognises that the Islamic institution of pilgrimage to Ka'ba had been implicit from the very beginning of Islam. He says, "The verse of the Qur'ān enjoining pilgrimage (2/196/1922) is dated by Bell before Badr and this adoption of an Arabian custom would suitably occur about the time of Muhammad's break with the Jews. Nevertheless something of this kind had long been implicit in Islam. An early Meccan revelation (160-3) recognised the Ka'bah as a house of God' and some at least of the Muslims who pledged themselves to Muhammad at al 'Aqabah regarded the pilgrimage to Mecca as a religious act and not simply as a convenient excuse for visiting Muhammad. Sa'd b. Mu'adh is said to have made the pilgrimage in the first pilgrimage-month after the Hijrah and to have been the guest of Umayya b. Khalaf".[32]

If the adoption of pilgrimage to Ka'bah came before Badr, as asserted by Bell, it was adopted long before the so-called break with the Jews, for Jewish Muslim relations deterriorated not before Badr but after it. In any case, the pilgrimage to Ka'bah is an original institution of Islam and has nothing to do with Judaism. If the Prophet wanted to flatter the Jews and mould his religion on Judaism, he should have forbidden the Medinese Muslims from making pilgrimages to Ka'bah.

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Jewish and Christian systems later cast aside.

Sir William Muir, writing in his book, *Life of Mohammad*, brings the charge against the Prophet that he cast aside Jewish and Christian systems adopted at first, when they had served their purpose. He says, "The Jewish and Christian systems, at first adopted honestly as the basis of his own religion, had no sooner served the purpose of establishing a firm authority, than they were cast aside, and virtually disowned."[33]

These remarks are very obscure and the charge against the holy Prophet is unsubstantiated. It is not clear how he adopted the Jewish and Christian systems at first as the basis of his own religion. Does the writer refer to the elements in Islam common with Judaism and Christianity? If so, these elements are found in Islam because Islam claims to be a continuation of previous divine messages. They were not introduced artificially to serve any purpose. They are still part of Islam and have not been disowned. The whole of the Qur'ān is with us. No part of it has been expunged. There is not a single Muslim scholar or commentator who claims that the Qur'ānic verses in which there are traces of Judaic and Christian teachings have been cancelled. How can it be said, then, that the Prophet at first adopted Judaic and Christian systems as the basis of his religion and later cast them aside when they had served their purpose? Sir William Muir does not make his point clear. It is, therefore, not possible to refute him beyond saying that the few Jewish and Christian elements found in Islam were not introduced for any deliberate purpose and still continue to form part of the Islamic religion. They were never disowned. If they had been , certain Qur'ānic verses would have been cancelled or expunged from the Qur'ān.

Change of Qiblah.

For sixteen months after emigration to Medina, the Prophet and his Companions faced Jerusalem in their prayers, as they used to do at Mecca but then a divine injunction was received enjoining the Prophet and the Muslims to turn towards the Ka'ba in their prayers. This change has been interpreted by the Orientalists as marking a break with the Jews. It is alleged that the Prophet took this step when he lost hope that the Jews would be reconciled to him. It is forgotten that the Prophet was not in a position to displease the Jews or to make a break with them until after his

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victory at Badr, when he grew confident of his strength. Therefore, the change of Qiblah had nothing to do with the supposed failure of the Prophet to reconcile the Jews. In any case, Jerusalem was the Qiblah both of the Jews and the Christians. It was not particularly a Jewish practice to turn towards Jerusalem in their worship. This fact is recognised by Montgomery Watt when he says :-

"If in his Meccan period Muhammad faced towards Jerusalem, this would not indicate Jewish influence or a desire to be like the Jews, since the practice was apparently common among Christians."[34]

The real fact is that in Mecca the polytheists turned towards the Ka'ba in their worship. If the Prophet and the Muslims had followed the same practice, Islam might have become indistinguishable from polytheism. Therefore, to mark themselves off from the polytheists, the Muslims were ordered to turn towards Jerusalem. But when the Prophet came to Medina and the majority of Medinese Arabs accepted Islam, there was no further need left for maintaining this distinction, because no Polytheists were present at Medina who turned their faces towards the Ka'ba. Therefore, orders were received that the Muslims should turn their faces in their prayers towards the Ka'ba. The change had nothing to do with Muslim Jewish relations or the supposed failure of the Prophet's attempt to reconcile the Jews.

Islam might have become a sect of Jewry.

Writing in his book, *Muhammad at Medina,* Montgomery Watt says, "It is interesting to speculate on what would have happened had the Jews come to terms with Muhammad, instead of opposing him. At certain periods they could have secured very favourable terms from him, including religious autonomy and on that basis the Jews might have become partners in the Arab empire and Islam a sect of Jewry."[35]

This is a wild speculation which is not supported by facts. The Constitution of Medina had already granted religious autonomy to the Jews. Moreover, personal freedom and the security of life and property had also been guaranteed by the holy Prophet to the Jews. What more concessions could he have given them, beyond acknoledging their Prophets as the true Prophets of God, a belief which is already a cardinal part of

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Islam? Would the holy Prophet have abandoned his own claim to Prophethood? If so, Islam might have been not a sect of Jewry, but would have lost its status as an independent religion and become completely merged in Judaism. If he still insisted on his Prophethood, that means that he would have promulgated news laws and customs and introduced new usages, as he, in fact, did. In that case Islam would have had an identity of its own, as now it has, and would not be a sect of Judaism. Muḥammad's claim to be a Prophet of God came in his Meccan life and is it imaginable that in Medina, he would have given up this claim without forfeiting the loyalty of his Meccan and Medinese followers? And what does the claim to be a Prophet imply, except the attempt to lay down a new social order with new laws, customs and usages? Islam was born in an Arabian milieu and if the Prophet had disregarded the requirements of this milieu to win the allegiance of a few Jews, he would have completely alienated his Arab followers. In that case his movement would have petered out and his name would have been cast in the limbo of oblivion. Thus, there was an essential conflict between the Arabian milieu of Islam and the Syrian milieu of Judaism and Christianity which could never be resolved. This explains the fact that as soon as Christianity stepped out of Syria and spread among the Greeks and Romans, it became quite other than the Judaic Christianity of the early followers of Jesus Christ.

Montgomery Watt's speculation that if the Jews had secured favourable terms from the Prophet and had not opposed him, Islam might have become a sect of Judaism, presupposes that all the main lines of Islam were laid down at Medina. But this is not true. Islam had already passed much of its formative phase in Mecca,and before the outset of the Medinese period, when the Prophet dealt with the Jewish problem. For example, the chapter, Mary, had already been revealed in Mecca with its insistence on the innocence of Mary, the Prophethood of Jesus Christ and his talking in the cradle. What Jew would have accepted these contents of the chapter, Mary, without forsaking Judaism. And then the Muslim form of prayer had been established in Mecca. As soon as the Prophet came to Medina, he adopted Friday, instead of Sabbath, as the day of weekly congregation and very soon afterward the Muslim mode of calling to prayer (adhān) was adopted. Would the Jews have given up their own form of prayer and ceased to observe the Sabbath without abandoning their reli-

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gion in its entirety? If not, how could Islam become a sect of Jewry? Similarly, the sanctity of Ka'ba as the house of God had already been recognised in Mecca by Islam. Would the Jews have adopted this feature of Islam, while still remaining Jews?

Was the Prophet worshipped by the Muslims?

Margoliouth in his book, "M*uhammad and the Rise of Islam*", says about the holy Prophet, "He inherited the devotion and adulation which had hitherto been bestowed on the idols and, though he never permitted the word worship to be used of the ceremonies of which he was the object, here long he became hedged with a state which differed little from that which surrounded a god".[36]

This is a totally unfounded charge. The fact was that the Prophet forbade the Muslims to do any thing which smacked of worship. 'Umar reports the holy Prophet as saying, "Do not eulogise me as the Christians eulogised the son of Mary. I am just His servant, so say, 'God's servant and messenger".[37]

Could humility go farther? If the Prophet wanted, he could assume many titles but till the last day of his life, he preferred to be called by the simple name, "Muhammad, the messenger of God".

If the Prophet had been worshipped by the Muslims, he would not have permitted his Companions to gain easy access to him. But he was easily accessible at all times. He did not even like the Muslims to be called his followers. Therefore, he preferred to call them by the title of 'Companions'. He was so easy of access to the humblest of men and treated them on a footing of such perfect equality that according to Anas, one of the maid servants to the people of Medina would hold God's messenger by the hand and take him wherever she wished.[38] Does this constitute worship? Can a maidservant be on such equal terms with a man who is said to have been worshipped by his followers?

The Prophet's knowledge of the Bible.

On the subject of the Prophet's knowledge of the Bible, the Orientalists make contradictory statements. Margoliouth tends to think that

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the Prophet was intimately acquainted with the Biblical lore and his knowledge of the Bible was so intimate that he actually used Biblical phrases in the Qur'ān, since the Qur'ān, according to him, is the word of the Prophet and not of God".[39]

On the other hand, Montgomery Watt seems to be of the view that till his early Medinese life, the Prophet knew next to nothing about the Bible and its contents He says, "The presumption is that at first the Muslims did not know the connexion of Islmael with Abraham and (according to the old Testament) with Arabs. At Medina, however, in closer contact with the Jews, they gained knowledge of such matters."[40] Although this is a statement about the Biblical knowledge of the Muslims in general, it probably includes the holy Prophet. But is it believable that the Prophet, who according to Margoliouth, had such intimate knowledge of the Bible that he could use Biblical phrases, did not know the simple fact that Ishmael was the son of Abraham? The contradictory statements of Margoliouth and Watt can not both be true.

Marriages of the holy Prophet.

Many of the marriages of the holy Prophet have been attributed by the majority of Orientalists to what they unjustly call his sensuality. These Orientalists forget that, during his youth, the Prophet was content with one wife only who was older than he by fifteen years. How are they going to explain this pheomenon on the basis of his supposed sensuality? When he came to Medina, he contracted a number of marriages but all his wives excluding one, 'Ayesha, were either widows or divorced women. An Orientalist who does not miss any opportunity to vilify the holy Prophet is forced to confess that his marriages were not the result of his supposed sensuality. He says that the Prophet was anxious to bind his chief followers more and more closely to himself."[41] That is the reason why he married so many wives. Montgomery Watt also admits that many of the marriages of the holy Prophet were contracted for reasons of social needs. He says, "In the case of Sawdah, whom he married at Mecca, the chief aim may have been to provide for the widow of a faithful Muslim as also in the later marriage with Zainab bint Khuzaymah....His first wives at Medina, 'Aisha and .... Hafṣa, were the daughters of the men on whom he leaned most, Abū

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Bakr and 'Umar. Umm Salmah was not merely a deserving widow, but a close relative of the leading men of the Meccan clan of Makhzum. Juwairiyah was the daughter of the chief of al-Muṣṭaliq with whom Muḥammad had been having special trouble. Zainab b. Jaḥsh, besides being Muḥammad's cousin, was a confederate of the Meccan clan of 'Abd Shams ....The clan of 'Abd Shams and Abu Sufyān b. Ḥarb, in particular were in his thoughts, for Abū Sufyān had a Muslim daughter, Umm Ḥabībah, married to a brother of Zainab b. Jaḥsh and when her husband died in Abyssinia, Muḥammad sent a message there to arrange a marriage with her. The marriage with Maymūnah would similarly help to cement relations with her brother-in-law, Muhammad's uncle, al-Abbas."[42] Montgomery Watt: further says, "It is practically certain that he had his feelings towards the fair sex well under control and that he did not enter into marriages except when they were politically and socially desirable".[43]

Much criticism has been directed against the holy Prophet because of his marrige with Zainab b. Jaḥsh. It is said that once when he visited her at home, he saw her in a condition of disarrary and was overcome by her physical beauty. But it is forgotten that Zainab was a cousin of the Prophet. He had seen her many times before but he was never attracted by her physical beauty, else he would have married her, instead of insisting on her that she should marry Zaid. Why, on this particular occasion, he should have been unduly attracted by her is not clear. The story seems to have been unnecessarily romanticized. Montgomery Watt writing on this subject says :-

"Despite stories, then, it is unlikely that he was swept off his feet by the physical attractiveness of Zaynab. The other wives are said to have feared her beauty, but her age when she married Muḥammad was thirty-five, or perhaps thirtyeight, which is fairly advanced for an Arab woman. The only one of his wives who was older at marriage was Khadījah".[44]

Was Arabia prepared to adopt religious reforms?

A theory has been propounded by some European scholars that the Prophet found a congenial soil in Arabia for effecting his religious revolution, as the Arabs were thirsting for a socio-religious change. This theory minimises the great achievement of the holy Prophet and the stupendous nature of his work. William Muir refutes this view in the following words :-

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"Causes are sometimes conjured to account for results produced by an agent apparently inadequate to effect them. Muhammad arose and forthwith the Arabs were aroused to a new and spiritual faith, hence the conclusion that Arabia was fermenting for a change and prepared to adopt it. To us, calmly reviewing the past, pre-Islamic history belies the assumption".[45]

NOTES

1. Margoliouth: *Muhammad and the Risəof Islam,* third edition, London. P. 47.
2. Sir William Muir: *The Life of Muhammad* Edinburgh 1923, PP. CXIV, CXV.
3. XLIII-31.
4. Ibn Ishāq : Sirat Rasūl Allāh tr by Al Guillaume, London, 1955, pp. 71, 72.
5. W. Montgomery Watt: *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman,* Oxford University Press 1961, P 19.
6. *Tarikh-e-Tabarī,* Urdu translation by Nafees Academy, Karachi, P. 61.
7. Ibid., P. 60.
8. Sir William Muir; *The Life of Muhammad,* Edinburgh 1923, PP. 46, 47.
9. *Tarikh-e-Ṭabarī* Vol. I, Nafees Academy Urdu tr. P. 106.
10. XLI-26.
11. XVII, 73, 74, 75.
    LIII-19, 23.
12. *Ḥayāt-Mohammad,* Cairo, Seventh editions PP. 160, to 167.
13. Margoliouth: Op. cit., PP. 211, 212.
14. Shiblī: *Sīrat al-Nabī,* Vol. I, sixth edition Azamgadh, P. 305.
15. Bosworth Smith: *Muhammad and Muhammadanism* Lahore, 1972, PP. 87, 88.
16. *Mishkāt al-Masābih:* Tr. by Dr. Robson Vol. I, Lahore, P. 242.
17. *Mishkāt:* Ibid, Vol, I, P. 250.
18. *Mishkāt;* Ibid Vol. I, P. 255.
19. *Mishkāt:* Ibid, Vol. III, P. 887.
20. *Mishkāt:* Ibid, Vol. III, p. 890.
21. *Mishkāt:* Ibid Vol. III, P. 890.
22. *Mishkāt:* Ibid, Vol. IV' P. 1310.
23. Montgomery Watt: Muhammad at Medina, Oxford, 1956, P. 225.
24. M. Watt: Ibid, P. 227.
25. Montgomery Watt: Ibid, P. 322.
26. Montgomery Watt: Ibid, P. 4.
27. Montgomery Watt: Ibid, P. 231.
28. Montgomery Watt: Ibid PP. 200, 201.
29. Montgomery Watt: op. cit., P. 198.

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30. Montgomery Watt: Ibid, P. 199.
31. Mishkāt: op. cit, Vol. I, p. 110.
32. Montgomery Watt: op. cit., P. 307.
33. Sir William Muir: op. cit., P. 514.
34. Montgomery Watt: op. cit,, P. 199.
35. Montgomery Wzatt: Ibid, P. 219.
36. Margaliouth: op. cit., P. 216.
37. Mishkāt: op. cit., Vol. III, P. 1021.
38. Mishkāt: Ibid, Vol. P. 1246.
39. Margoliouth: op. cit., pp. 60, 61.
40. Montgomery Watts op. cit., pp. 204, 205.
41. Margoliouth: op. cit., P. 176.
42. Montgomery Watt: Ibid, pp. 287, 288.
43. Montgomery Watt: Ibid, P. 332.
44. Montgomery Watt: Ibid, P. 331.
45. William Muir: op. cit., P. xcvii.

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